



Au Naturel

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Links of Interest

NUSOL Natural Hair Expo
Raleigh Convention Center
Saturday, March 4, 2017

A Bit of Comedic Irony

Okay, I don't ordinarily subscribe to this type of harassment. It's just not right. But then, a lot of things weren't right about recent politics in North Carolina. So after seeing a recent political video, all I could think was "Karma is a mother...". After McCrory's administration had our state before the US Supreme Court TWICE IN FOUR YEARS to overturn unjust efforts to disenfranchise voters (Gerrymandering and Voter ID laws), I was through with him. God only knows how much it cost our State. House Bill 2-- which limits a workers rights to sue for discrimination in the workplace, was simply another reason to vote on Election

New Year's Greetings

Friends and Family: I pray that the New Year has greeted you with open arms, a warm heart and a giving spirit. I give thanks that another year has passed and I'm able to greet you on the other side of the timeline with words of love and thanksgiving. This newsletter is again on the late side--at the end of January. It's not because I ever forget to write. It's only because I must be in the right frame of mind. I don't want to waste anyone's time by writing material you don't even feel is worth your time to read. So, I'm selective in timing and topic. In order to push out this issue on time, I went into my archives to find material that I've written and never published. The last article is one such piece. I think the time is right for it. I hope you find it interesting. The remaining sections of the newsletter were written in a burst of inspiration. I can dive deep when I want to. I just have to find the right wave. So, I hope 2017 is a year that elevates you all to new heights of discovery, of compassion, of love. Here's a [soulful introduction](#) that I sent to my closest phone contacts as a New Year's Greeting. I likewise share it with you. I think it sets the tone for 2017 just right. Peace and love.

African Threading for Straightening & Styling



Perhaps one day I'll have the patience to slow down long enough and try a cool style like this one. It's hot! Hands down. I work in a pretty chill environment. I love my co-workers. In fact, the executive director of our international organization has a Haitian daughter whose hair she used to twist and braid when she was a little girl. So, she's really well versed on Black hair and celebrates its diversity. People are really not as hung up as they used to be. But if there's any conservatism, it comes from me.

Not because I think the style is too radical. (Check out the photo below of my Nubian knot style quite a few years back. I've been in this game for a minute!) I'm down with funky! I flow rather effortlessly into it in fact. So, that's not it. The conservatism is primarily a factor of time. When I'm in the salon, I'm doing hair or I'm not there at all. And invariably when I'm doing hair, it's someone

Day! And then to add insult to injury, McCrory called a special session of the General Assembly in December to limit the powers of incoming Governor Roy Cooper. Again, the courts have had to step in to quell an outright abuse of power! So when I saw this video of his recent visit to DC, I laughed OUT LOUD as did every member of my household!! Now, his friends in the General Assembly want to legislate that such actions as these are illegal. **Imagine:** NC residents didn't harass him. This incident occurred in DC. Yet, his cronies want to create legislation to control our citizenry because of his unfortunate date with destiny. I wish they spent half as much time trying to protect Civil and Voting Rights as they are spending trying to protect McCrory's reputation. A moot point! That horse is gone through the gate! BYE!!!

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else's. I have so many irons on the fire that time spent on myself for purely creative pursuits is rather limited. Sometimes I think that's a shame. But mostly, I don't think about it at all. No time. ☺ But, I confess that I like the vibe of this style. And I really should try it before my gray becomes so much of a distraction that it would be more of an oddity than a fashion statement! ☹ Is that an ageist statement? Sorry. I'm talking about myself though; so, it can't be all THAT bad! *One day, one day.*



Well while styling a client's hair the other day, she asked about African threading as an alternative to straightening. I understand the logic because I employ it all the time with my two-strand twists; but, I use satin scarves instead of thread to stretch and maintain my length. So, I get the concept. But, I thought I should research it a bit more. After doing a quick Net-surf, [this article on African threading](#) proved to be a fairly good summation of the process and the benefits. If you've got the inkling, I say "Go for it." My client asked how I straighten my hair and I honestly told her: "I haven't straightened my hair with an iron

since 1999." We all busted out laughing because it sounded so CRAZY!! *(That's also the last time I ate meat. So, I guess you could say that my soul was preparing for a new millennium in more ways than one!)* 1999?! Damn! That's a Prince Album from waaayyyy back in the day! That's a whole 'nother epoch. Really?! It doesn't seem so long to me at all though. But, guess what? IT IS! ☺ Whew! Anyway, I told her I straighten my hair with a blow-dryer because it's "fast and furious." I've been doing it for years and I've never experienced negative effects from doing so. So, I'm not likely to opt for a two step-two day process to straightening my hair. Just keepin' it real: Some of the hair bloggers on the Net are sisters who have A LOT OF TIME ON THEIR HANDS!! I appreciate that they're pushing the envelope and seeking alternatives. But, I would primarily sport the African threading style as a style in and of itself. And I would need to keep it for at least 2-3 weeks or it's not worth the investment of time. As a means of straightening for me personally, it's a "No." I would much rather jam with some curlformers to have shine, sheen and bounce all at the same time. But if African threading is where your natural hair journey takes you, RIDE ON!

From my cursory review of the Net websites and articles, my main suggestion would be to avoid pulling the hair too tightly while wrapping it. If the hair is pulled too tautly to encourage straightness, tension will likely result at the roots which could encourage traction alopecia. Likewise if the thread is wrapped too tightly around the base of the hair section, it can encourage breakage where the

thread meets the hair. Either result eventually would be undesirable. So, nurture your hair as you experiment. As my Mom always says, you should care for your hair like you care for a beautiful cashmere sweater. Treat it gently and lovingly, and it will reward you for many years to come. Happy Threading!!

Poetically Speaking: The Power of Melody

When I consider why I've been so slow to write this month's issue of Au Naturel, I confess: I've been listening to way too much NPR. I'm kind of fascinated with Trump. He's an enigma. I guess I'm looking for some type of pattern so as to be able to predict something about his character; but, I feel it's not to be found. I'm not sure if that's good or bad. But, my ears have been glued to the radio. I accept that he is my President. And I wish him well; because, way too many lives pivot on the decisions that he makes. But, the downside of all of this political savvy is that it's a total downer on the love vibe. So on Thursday, January 26th, with the newsletter not even started, let alone complete, I skipped past the radio and went straight to my girl, Jill. She has ALWAYS got my back when I need to move into a more sensuous state of being. The mind has to take a back seat and shut up. It's all about the heart, the spirit, the flow. And as always, she did not disappoint. [Here's a little ditty](#) that is a wonderful accompaniment to a morning or evening commute. It did wonders in helping to bring me back to love. It's all about the flow. 😊

I like to dance A LOT though I mainly get to do so in my car. My sons have accepted that about me for some time. If you are afraid of being seen with a dancing driver, don't ride with me. I'm always a focused driver; but strangely enough, my concentration narrows even more keenly when I'm dancing so it doesn't affect my driving at all. In fact, I've always believed I'm a better driver when I'm dancing! The only illustration I can give as to how that could possibly be is in [this scene from Akeelah and the Bee](#). (*The mind, body and spirit are integrally connected.*) At any rate during a morning commute, grooving truncates the time and circumstances significantly. One day while commuting during 140 rush hour, the flow stopped completely due to a traffic jam. I felt myself starting to feel the state of my condition, and I wanted to escape. So, I got out, put the top down (After all, we were at a standstill) and started a jam session of my own. Suddenly, I was transported to another state of mind completely. I was lost in a vibe with God's bounty spread out all around me. The ride was therapeutic. In no time, I was at my office. That's how we roll.

Another time, I was commuting to work when a song came on the airwaves that took me back in my mind's eye. I saw my Dad driving in his car and bopping to the sounds of Mary J. Blige. (*You don't often see 70 year old men bopping while driving.* 😊) This song could not come on the radio and find him sitting still. I recalled the funny way that he used to twist his shoulders, snap his fingers and clap his hands with his characteristic smile and flow. I love Mary J. for one reason: [this song](#) brought a smile to my Dad's heart EVERY TIME HE HEARD IT! [It beautifully captures how he felt about life and himself.](#) 😊 My family dances and drives. We always have. If you want to be guaranteed to see my Mom bopping her head while driving, [this is the tune that does it](#). When I heard this vibe was

inadvertently borrowed from Marvin Gaye, I understood why she loves it so much. That was definitely her time. Incidentally, my sons don't dance and drive. They have a heavy dose of McCarthy blood to ground them. That's probably a good thing. 😊 But, they are lovers of music! Have you ever met anyone who wasn't? So, the next time you need to go to another plane or readjust your attitude, don't dwell in the doldrums: Take a deep breath, turn on your favorite vibe and take flight. It's guaranteed to transform. [Check this out!](#) Feel the love? The Haitian twin girls whose hair I style (9 years old) LOVE THIS ONE! So do I. 😊

Artistic Interlude: Girl Power³ & Boy Vulnerable⁶--A Portrait of the 89th Academy Awards

Okay, my people. If you haven't seen *Hidden Figures* yet, you're doing yourself a grave disservice! I've seen it twice and cried both times. I didn't cry because it's sad. I cried because I was so moved by the power and intensity of these sisters' struggles. I cried because they achieved major milestones for themselves and humanity. It is NOT just a Black film. It is an American film. It chronicles the multi-faceted truth of the Black experience in America and highlights the very subtle ways in which we have under-developed ourselves and our nation by restraining the achievements of an entire people. It's compelling. And there are a million other stories just like it. As Janelle Monae states in the film: 'Someone had to be the first.' For African-Americans, those firsts were primarily in the 20th century; as the shackles of shame were removed and excellence found new heights. And yet, others are still emerging every day. We give thanks.

When I reflect on this year's Oscar buzz, I am very excited for the first time in a long time. Uncharacteristically this year, I've seen four of the films up for nomination: *Lion*, *Fences*, *Hacksaw Ridge* and *Hidden Figures*. I WILL see *Arrival* (Regal Theater) this week-end, come *Hell or High Water* (Redbox)! (*Sunday Update*: *Arrival* is a total waste of time!! For real! It WILL NOT win. Neither will *Hell or High Water* though it's a far cry more entertaining, in my opinion.) From what I've seen so far, all of the movies that are up for consideration are very different. They all represent the drama genre, *La La Land* excluded (a musical) which I have ABSOLUTELY NO DESIRE TO SEE! (*Sorry Ryan. You're hot as Hell though!* 😊) But, each storyline is uniquely passionate and beautiful with themes of [injustice](#), [loss](#), [war](#), [racism](#), [poetry](#), [conflict](#), [hope](#), [discovery](#) and one that seems to have the depth to master [all of the above](#). Who could ask for more?! I think I will actually have to watch the Oscars this year. (*I typically don't... Long story.*) *Lion* was a formidable movie. But, I don't think it will win. And unfortunately, the best actor in the movie ([Sunny Pawar](#)) was not even nominated for an award. He's very young though; so, I'm sure it's for the best. *Fences* should clinch the Best Actress award for Viola Davis. I haven't seen a female performance among those I've seen which eclipses hers. And for the best actor award, I frankly believe that Andrew Garfield will take it for *Hacksaw Ridge*. Yes, I think he beat Denzel. I'm just keepin' it real. If you haven't seen *Hacksaw Ridge*; well, see it and judge for yourself.

With that said, the film that is not on the list of nominees but which could easily hold its own with the others is [Dangal](#). The only reason that I've even had the

good fortune to see this movie on the big screen is because I live in a Metropolitan community with such a large Indian population that the local movie theaters keep a Bollywood movie on the rosters at all times. *Thank God for diversity!* The theater was packed when we saw it. We bought the last tickets when we got in. They had to turn away the Indian man behind us. I felt sure his wife was parking the car with the kids in tow. But, I wasn't giving up our tickets. And I'm glad I didn't. When you see my husband laughing heartily at a subtitled film, you know the subtitles didn't even matter! It was powerful--Girl Powerful!

And so, this 89th Academy Awards promises to be one for the ages in my mind. Black and Indian actors are making their presence known in new and varying ways; and the screenwriters are to be applauded most vociferously. I guess Chris Rock won't be asked to host this one [after his last showing](#). But, it's all good. Brother has got other irons in the fire. If you didn't already know: He's on tour and will be here at the DPAC between Feb. 13-15th. I've got our tickets! I'm looking forward to it; but, I'm honestly a little nervous. I sure hope he doesn't get booed off the stage like [Wanda Sykes did when he gets political](#). YOU KNOW he's going to go there! [I don't know why in the world he's launching a Blackout Tour in the South](#) under a new political regime. In all fairness, the dates were likely set BEFORE the election; but, he still knew where the political chips had fallen when he announced the tour. I guess he hedged his bets by launching the tour in Durham. Seeing as [Durham is the reason that Pat McCrory is no longer our governor](#)--the primary reason I voted this past election, the audience will surely have his back. I guess he figured if he's going to launch controversial material in the South, he might as well be in a Black city. (Y'all pray for him when he gets to Birmingham, AL, though FOR REAL!!! And Kudos to him for going to Cherokee, NC. *WHAT??!!*) I think he has the grace and mastery to blend comedic humor and political correctness in a way that Wanda does not. I think he'll be fine. But just in case things get *ALL THE WAY LIVE* up in the DPAC, I think I'll put some extra padding on my elbows and a brick in my purse. I'm just sayin'!

But, trust brother Sinbad to bring it back around to peace and neutrality on March 19th. I've got my tickets to that show too! I hope to see some of you at the happenings. With peace and love. ☺

Contemplation on Free Will, Necessity & Duality

There is an ever flowing debate within the spiritual community regarding [predestination and free will](#). From my experience of life, and my ever-present quest for death of the ego, I have been shown and have come to realize that life is indeed a program—a matrix. We live within the parameters of the program based on our respective life circumstances, our personal verities and realities. But, they are inherently limiting and therefore pre-ordained. In that regard, free will is a construct of the human imagination that from a God's-eye perspective does not exist at all. It is a delusion of the capacity for infinite possibilities but which is bound by the laws of nature and of time which pre-determine our options and therefore our future courses of action. For example, if a cell on a microscope slide has enough self-awareness to want to become a liver cell, it must first find itself to hold the genetic predisposition to become a liver cell. And

then, it must find itself in the appropriate environment to become such. It transcends the “nature vs nurture” argument and strikes at the core of beingness. Because in essence, the cell is and remains a cell. Its reality is defined in the context of its beingness. So, that contextual reality is the program which frames life and binds free will into narrow parameters which leave very little room for “free” expression at all. Likewise, a human being is confined and defined by pre-ordination. Can I become a politician or a social activist? But of course, but can I do it on the moon or even in the ocean? Why would I want to become an activist on the moon? It is necessity that is the mother of invention not sheer desire and/or fanciful reverie. So, much of our “will” is driven by our inherent need as spiritual-material beings with the Earth plane as our primary stage for creation. Will I think to create what I do not intrinsically need? Would a dog think of creating a car? So what is it that I do not have the capacity to perceive and therefore lack the wherewithal to create because I lack the need for it. With this line of reasoning, we realize that even our thoughts are encoded within finite parameters. So, why are we here?

Humanity lives as a parasite on the thin outer epidermis of Gaia. Her aura encapsulates us and protects us from the Sun’s rays. It is the ego which is the “viral” (personal judgment) glitch in our program that compels us to choose war when we would rather have peace, to hoard when we have the resources to share. Scarcity is not a true state of reality on Gaia—only a figment of human imagination. Would one argue that there is a scarcity of dry land in the ocean? It seems like a ludicrous thought—one that we would not likely entertain. Yet, we would quite vociferously argue that there is a scarcity of water in the desert. But, this concept is equally ludicrous, as there too scarcity does not exist. In truth, the desert is being inherently what it is. So, when we embrace the beauty of dryness and barrenness, we say that the desert is whole and complete and perfect. Why is it so much easier to entertain the idea that the ocean is whole complete and perfect in its liquid bounty? Perhaps it is because water is the giver of life. So, we embrace its necessity in being much more than we embrace dry, barrenness. So again, human need drives our perception of what defines scarcity, abundance, beauty and grace. Likewise, our “will” is driven by need which therefore places us collectively within a well-defined construct (or program) from which we seek absolution.

Gaia is Eden. And bounty is everywhere. So, scarcity, the concept, is grounded in fear and avarice which are symptoms of seemingly corrupted programming. When did God’s beautiful program become “corrupted”? Can it be corrupted? Is it corruption or simply balancing duality? Am I making sense? Let me explain: Many understand the concept of yin and yang, the ever-dueling, ever dancing, mirror reflections of “self” co-joined eternally in a corporeal state of unity or one-ness. But, if the “two halves of the coin” are ultimately the same thing, the framework to debate the yin or yang side of the coin over the other is a microcosmic, narrow perspective that does not adequately represent the essence and true nature of the coin. So when we accept our separation from God as a “true” state of being, we suffer. When we define ourselves as apart from each other, we suffer. And so, Gaia, our home—a veritable garden of abundance, becomes a hovel reflecting the state of the minds living herein.



Driven by our egos, we define, create and embrace all things which will set us above and apart from others. And so, we bring hell into being. The greatest commandment is to love thy God with all your mind, heart and soul and your neighbor as yourself. If I “need” to be better than you, then I have accepted an artificial construct—a corrupted program; and therefore, I have lowered my own self. Why would I lower myself knowingly? I would not. But, ignorance is indeed bliss. And so, how can I love you when I ultimately and ignorantly don’t love myself? How can I love God-force when I knowingly reject it? In doing so, I believe I have elevated myself in status when in reality, I have sunk into the depths of suffering. We have become Icarus, with pride elevating us “above” the prescribed parameters of our existence, and ultimately falling to our ruin. Why? That is the million millennial question. Perhaps we need the ego to even stay grounded in this human frame and this material plane. Perhaps the existence of the ego and balancing duality is the very essence of human existence as we strive towards self-mastery and the elevation of human consciousness. “Why” is the ultimate God-question that can never be satisfactorily answered regarding anything. Yet, I would surmise that the answer is “love.” Gaia is green and water-based and bountiful because of love. There is no duality in love—only essence.